



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 117th CONGRESS, SECOND SESSION

Vol. 168

WASHINGTON, MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2022

No. 6

Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal God, we pause to thank You for providing us with strength for each day. As You continue to be our help in times of trouble, may our hearts be lifted to You in gratitude.

Lord, guide our lawmakers to show their gratitude for Your mercies by obeying Your precepts as You help them navigate through these challenging times. May their reverence for You provide them with a wisdom that will glorify Your Name. Keep our Senators from deviating from integrity so that their thoughts, words, and actions will please You.

We pray in Your Holy Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The President pro tempore led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will pro-

ceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Alan Davidson, of Maryland, to be Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). The Senator from Vermont.

JOHN LEWIS VOTING RIGHTS ADVANCEMENT ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Madam President, last week I spoke on the floor, and I reflected on the unthinkable events of January 6, 2021. We all remember when a violent mob attempted to snuff out one of our democracy's most sacred traditions: the peaceful transition of power. That mob's attack on our Nation's Capitol was fueled by our former President's Big Lie, the utterly false alternate reality that Joe Biden stole the 2020 election through widespread fraud.

But the January 6 insurrection, as nightmarish as it was, was not the only thing that was spawned by the Big Lie. Inspired by the former President's baseless conspiracy theory, dozens of States have passed new laws suppressing voters and making it easier for partisan officials to overturn the will of their constituents. These have been billed as "election integrity" or "election security" laws. Even George Orwell would be impressed by these brazen euphemisms.

Disenfranchising tens of thousands of minority voters does nothing to improve the integrity of our elections, and empowering partisan actors to disqualify ballots and ignore the popular will actually makes our elections more insecure.

A record number of these voter suppression laws are being considered and enacted as we head toward a major midterm election that will shape the direction of our country. Many of these laws would not see the light of day if the Department of Justice still possessed its preclearance powers under

the 1965 Voting Rights Act. However, the Supreme Court unwisely decided to gut the Justice Department's preclearance powers in the Shelby County v. Holder decision in 2013. And then, adding insult to injury, the Supreme Court toppled another critical pillar of the Voting Rights Act in the 2021 Brnovich decision, even further limiting the Federal Government's tools to combat voter suppression.

So with a green light from our Nation's highest Court and constant prodding from a man who refuses to accept reality, partisan State actors have breathed new life into the Big Lie—not by breaking laws as the January 6 mob did but by making them.

Now, I happen to have a bipartisan bill to restore the Justice Department's powers to oversee and prevent States from enacting discriminatory voting laws: the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. I worked very hard to craft a compromise bill that has garnered Republican support here in the Senate, so it was truly a low point when Republicans recently refused to even allow debate on my bipartisan legislation—wouldn't even allow debate. Isn't that the whole point of being a Senator—to debate and vote on bills?

How can you justify telling your constituents that you refuse to even allow debate on a voting rights bill with a 56-year record of bipartisanship? Are we that afraid to simply do our jobs?

It bears repeating, but the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act would simply restore and update provisions of the Voting Rights Act that have been overwhelmingly supported by both parties throughout the law's history. The Voting Rights Act has been reauthorized by large bipartisan majorities in Congress five times and proudly signed into law by Presidents Nixon, Reagan, and George W. Bush. That is not what you might call a liberal trio of Presidents.

The most recent Voting Rights Act reauthorization in 2006 was a 98-to-0

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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